

Minutes
Catawba County Board of Commissioners
Regular Session, Monday, June 4, 2007 9:30 a.m.

Board of Commissioners

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Waiver of Solid Waste Disposal Fees – Balls Creek Campground 637 06/04/07

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, June 4, 2007 at 9:30 a.m. in the 1924 Courthouse, Robert E. Hibbitts Meeting Room, 30 North College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Barbara G. Beatty and Commissioners Dan Hunsucker and Lynn M. Lail.

Commissioner Glenn Barger was absent.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Deputy County Attorney Anne Marie Pease and County Clerk Barbara Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.
2. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. Vice-Chair Barbara Beatty offered the invocation.
4. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 21, 2007. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Recognition of Special Guests: Chair Barnes welcomed everyone present and Betty Coulter from the Newton-Conover School Board.
6. Comments for Items not on the Agenda. None.
7. Presentations:
Vice Chair Beatty and Commissioner Lynn Lail presented a Distinguished Public Service Award to Millie Barbee, in recognition of her successful career as President and CEO of the Greater Hickory Convention and Visitor's Bureau, as well as her contribution to historic preservation in Catawba County and across the state. A recipient of the 2007 North Carolina Travel Industry Association's Bill Sharpe Award, Ms. Barbee's outstanding contributions to the travel industry have influenced North Carolina residents and visitors throughout the state and earned her the title of "North Carolina Tourism Ambassador". The proclamation further recognized that her passion and commitment to the historic preservation of our state's treasures is unsurpassed and has resulted in the safeguarding of numerous structures and sites.
8. Appointments: None.
9. Consent Agenda:
County Manager J. Thomas Lundy presented the three following items for consent:
 - a. A request for a budget revision to increase the current Finance Department budget by \$35,000 to account for increased ambulance billing fees received during this fiscal year. Catawba County contracts with EMS Management Systems and Consultants, Inc. to provide routine billing, bill processing and fee collection services for ambulance charges, as well as account management. The County pays EMS Management Systems and Consultants a monthly fee equal to 8% of net ambulance collections. The County also pays fees to two collection agencies that collect delinquent accounts. The initial budget for ambulance fees for this fiscal year was \$250,000, which equals 8% of budgeted revenues of \$2,950,000, plus \$14,000 for delinquent accounts. Analyzing revenue collected to date, the County's Finance staff now estimates ambulance revenues will exceed \$3,370,000, or \$420,000 more than budgeted revenues. Staff estimates expenses will be around \$285,000, including EMS fees on current billings and fees paid for delinquent accounts.
 - b. A request to allocate \$8,249 in insurance funds received for a wrecked Building Services Inspection vehicle for the purchase of a replacement vehicle. A 2002 Chevrolet S-10 pickup truck was totaled on May 2, 2007, when a driver ran a stoplight at the intersection of Robinson and Sandy Ford Roads and hit the County-owned vehicle. Insurance has subsequently paid a claim on this vehicle totaling \$8,249, which was added to the County's Self-Insurance Fund. Allocation of these funds would provide enough money, along with funds already in the Building Services Division budget, to purchase a replacement vehicle.
 - c. A request to waive the normally charged solid waste tipping fee (\$26.72 in this instance) for cleanup of debris resulting from a fire at the Balls Creek Campground. An arson fire destroyed three tent structures at the campground on Buffalo Shoals Road on February 12, 2007. On May 17, 2007, the Junior Athletic Boosters and AVID classes at Bandys High School sent a letter to the County requesting that the solid waste tipping fee for approximately two tandem loads of demolition debris be waived. These Bandys High School groups, in an effort to give back to the community, volunteered their services on Saturday, May 19 for the cleanup of debris from the fire. On May 23, Mr. Glenn Fulbright delivered debris from the Balls Creek Campground cleanup to the Blackburn Landfill. In the spirit of assisting with the cleanup of one of Catawba County's historical sites, County staff authorized the Landfill to accept the material at no charge.

Chair Barnes asked if any Commissioner wanted any item broken out of the consent agenda. None were requested. Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.
10. Department Reports.
 - a. Finance:
Jeanne Jarrett, Assistant Finance Director, presented a request from the Hickory Public Schools for the transfer of \$17,000 in funds budgeted for the completed Grandview Middle School project to the Northview Middle School Gymnasium Project. The gymnasium floor at Northview Middle School is

in need of refinishing. This renovation project includes sanding, screening, repainting and three coats of sealing. The sanding will eliminate an unevenness in areas of the gym floor caused by past high humidity levels. The repairs to the gym floor are scheduled for completion this summer. There will be approximately \$25,000 remaining in the Grandview Middle School project account after this transfer. Vice-Chair Beatty asked what had caused this on such a new floor and the response was a humidity problem. The floor had already been renovated once under the floor warranty but the humidity problem continued as well as a leak occurring after that renovation and after the warranty had expired. The humidity problem and leak has since been resolved. Vice-Chair Beatty asked how long the floor should last after this renovation and it was estimated it should last 10-15 years and was assured that measures were in place to check the humidity levels in the gym.

Vice-Chair Beatty made a motion to approve the transfer. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Sheriff's Office:

Susan Branch, Business Manager, presented a request for the Board to approve a joint grant application with the City of Hickory for a 2007 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) and the allocation of \$15,673, which represents Catawba County's share of the grant funds, once the grant is actually awarded. Final applications for these grants are due by or before July 2, 2007. Catawba County and the City of Hickory are eligible to receive a combined allocation of \$51,600 under the 2007 Justice Assistance Grant Program. The JAG Program is a formula-based grant through the Office of Justice Programs/Bureau of Justice Assistance that utilizes Uniform Crime Reporting statistics of all law enforcement agencies. Each city and county eligible for an award is given a direct award amount derived from these crime statistics. Cities and counties are required to submit joint applications for the available funding. The City of Hickory has agreed to serve as the lead agency in the grant application process.

JAG funds may be spent on purposes that benefit law enforcement. There is no match required. The City of Hickory plans to add Tasers and tint-meter equipment to their police force. The Catawba County Sheriff's Office proposes to use its JAG funds to purchase Digital In-car Video Systems, a technology upgrade that will enhance officer safety and allow for better evidence collection. The system currently used by the Sheriff's Office uses limited cameras with data recorded to VHS tapes. Digital systems have cameras with features such as light compensation and zoom control, which can function both automatically and by remote, activated by an officer. The technology upgrade will also improve audio recorded by the system through a 900 MHz body pack automatic activation receiver. Unlike the basic functions of VHS collection, a digital data system will have user-friendly software for playback, searching, annotating, file management and archiving. It will provide reports to aid supervisors, and security to insure data integrity and chain of custody. It can also allow GPS marking for use in circumstances such as when a weapon or contraband is thrown from a vehicle.

County Manager Lundy indicated the current proposed budget included the upgrade of twelve units and this funding would provide the upgrading of an additional four units – which would result in 16 of the 29 units upgraded with this technology.

Commissioner Lail made a motion to approve the grant application. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Other Items of Business.

a. Social Services - Reinventing:

Section II F of the 2005-2006 Budget Ordinance states: "Reinventing Departments may create or abolish positions which impact the outcomes approved by the Board of Commissioners and within available revenues upon summary approval of the Board of Commissioners. Approval will come at the next regularly scheduled Board of Commissioners' meeting and will be attached and approved as part of the minutes."

Under this provision of the Budget Ordinance, the following personnel changes have been made to Social Services' budget:

Foster Care Social Worker (1)

The number of children entering foster care in Catawba County has increased over the past year to the extent that additional staff are necessary to assure families are reunited or the children move to a permanent family through adoption. From May 2006 through April 2007 the number of children in social services' custody and care increased from 208 to 249 or 20%.

Child Protective Services Social Worker (2)

With increased cases the Child Protective Services caseload of active cases is not at 193 several above the state standard of no more than 10 per social worker. This will bring the caseload average to just under 10. Additionally, the area has experienced staff on extended medical leave causing difficulty in meeting mandates.

Income Maintenance Caseworker (2)

Food assistance continues to maintain a high level of citizens using the program as well as added Federal and State Policy taking additional time for staff to process applications and reviews. Additional staff are required to effectively issue benefits for the program to the needy population of Catawba County and realize workloads more closely equal to the benchmarks of other counties.

Human Service Coordinator (1)

Day care's ever-changing landscape of regulations and requirements as well as the movement of the workload of citizens entering and exiting the service places an extra level of work on staff. They are unable to maintain the quick pace required in that program with the current staff.

b. Library - Reinventing:

Also under this section of the Budget Ordinance, the following change has been made to the Library Budget: An increase in the salary and benefits associated with Library position #1162, Branch Manager I, grade 67. The position is currently .8 FTE (32 hours per week) and is changed to full time (forty hours per week) effective July 1, 2007. The salary and benefit cost of this position will continue to be shared equally by the City of Conover and Library (reinventing).

12. Attorneys' Report. None.

13. Manager's Report.

Manager J. Thomas Lundy requested the Board reschedule their mid-month meeting from June 18, 2007 to the evening of June 26, 2007 due to Commissioners' scheduling conflict. Since the Planning Board is scheduled to meet in the Robert E. Hibbits Meeting Room on June 25, 2007, it was suggested that the meeting be reschedule to Tuesday, June 26, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Lundy also noted that this would be the proposed date for Budget Adoption since all Commissioners would be present and it would be waiting as late in the month as possible to see what the General Assembly did. Vice-Chair Beatty made a motion to reschedule the meeting as indicated. The motion carried unanimously.

14. Chair Barnes adjourned the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

Katherine W. Barnes, Chair
Board of Commissioners

Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk